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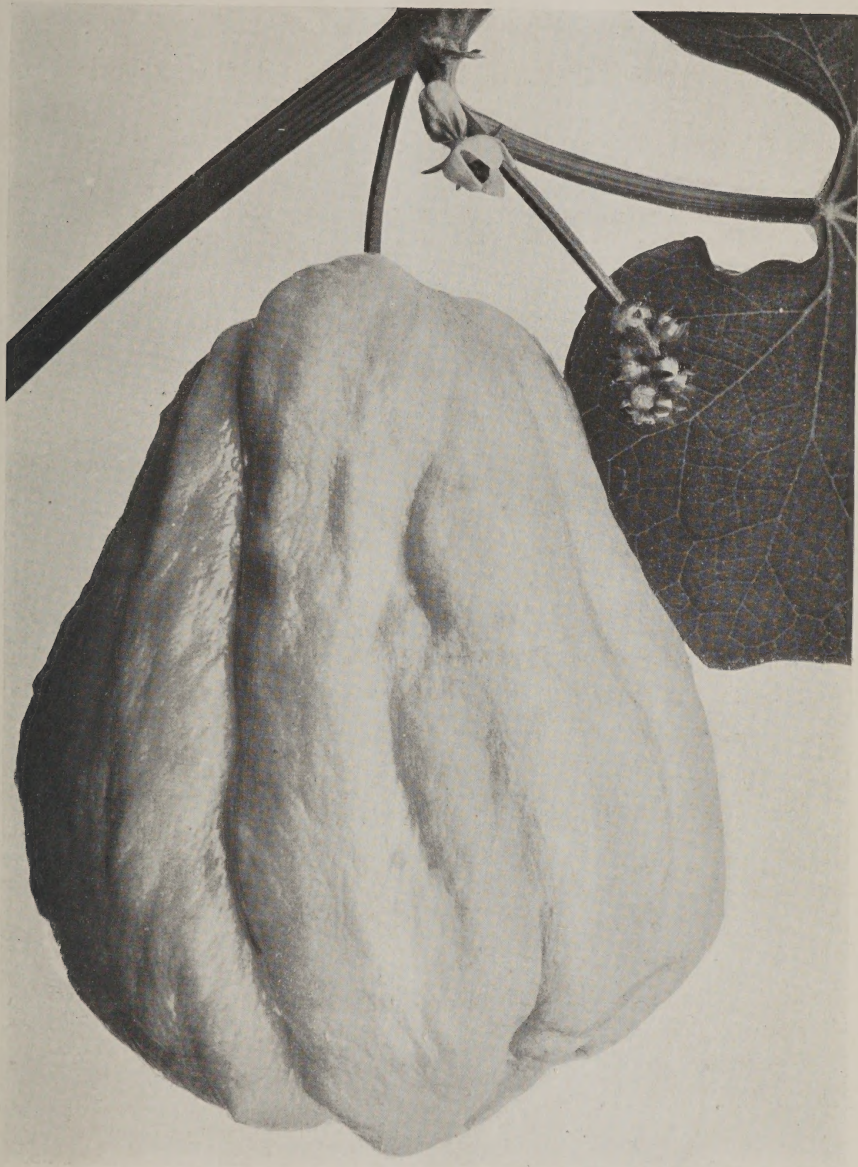
CULTURAL DIRECTIONS

FOR

THE CHAYOTE

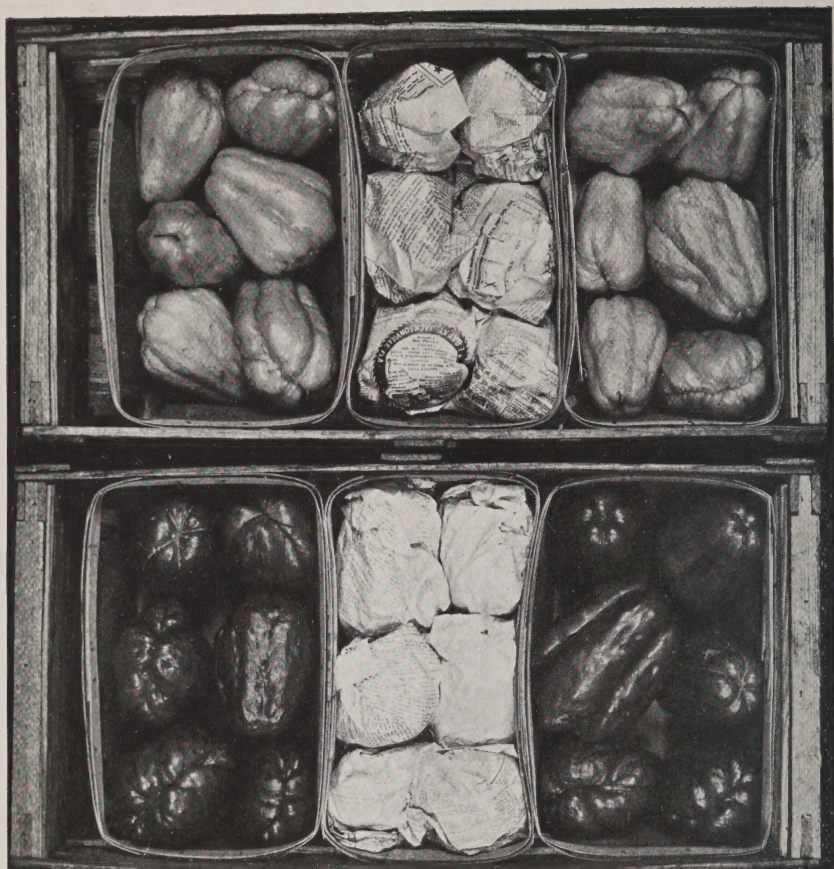
This perennial vine for cultivation on arbors and fences as far north as the Carolinas, furnishes a fruit which is a delicate winter vegetable.

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Plant Industry
Office of Foreign Seed and Plant
Introduction
Washington
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Fruit and flowers of the Chayote.

To the right of the fruit is shown a small white female flower, and below against the dark background of the leaf a cluster of male flowers. Natural size. Photo No. 16240.

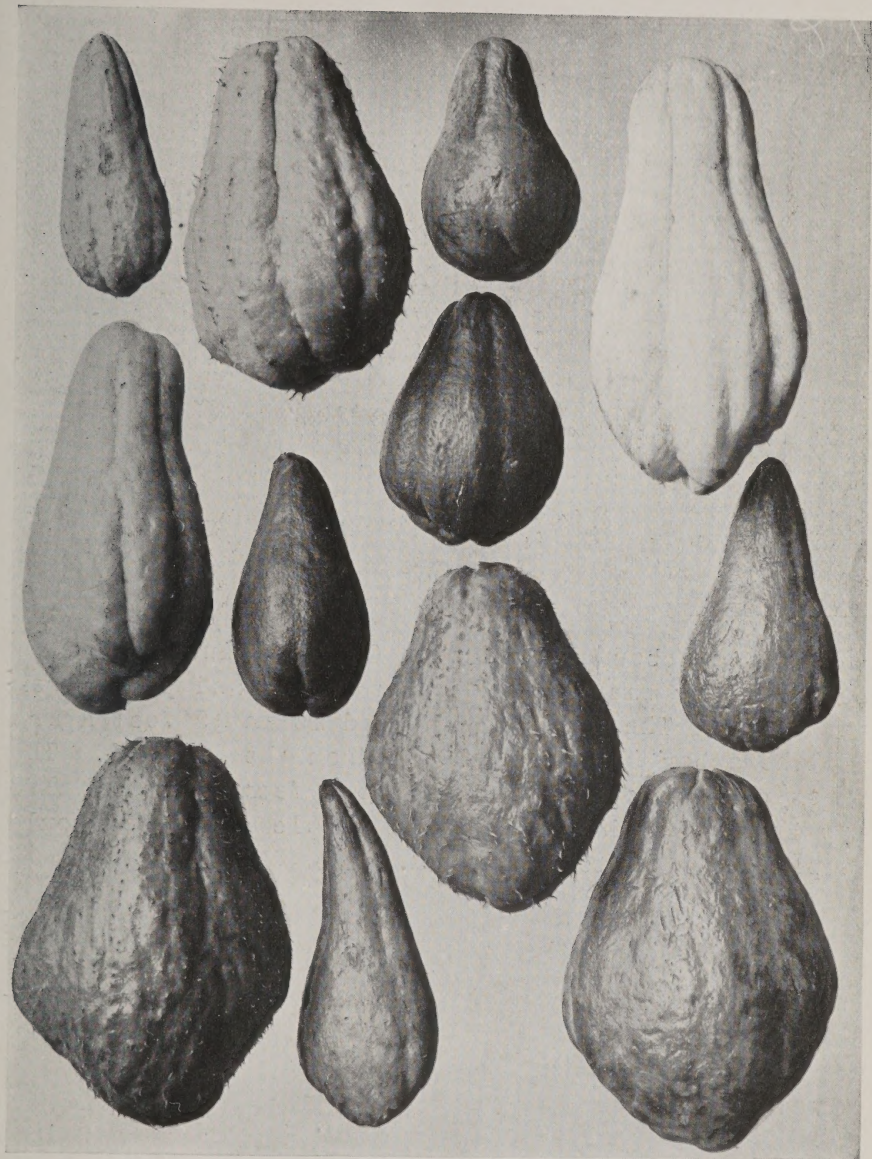


A commercial shipment of Chayotes.

Two crates of Chayotes opened for display on their arrival at Washington, showing one method of shipment from Brocksville, Fla., in six-basket carrier tomato crates. This crate contains 36 Chayotes. Photo No. 19249.

CULTURAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE CHAYOTE.

The chayote (*Chayota edulis*) is a climbing vine belonging to the cucumber family. It slightly resembles the cucumber in growth, although it is much more vigorous and prolific. The plant is a perennial, easily



Varieties of the Chayote.

In Porto Rico there are a large number of varieties of the Chayote, some of which have better flavor than others. They vary in spininess and in the depth of green coloration. Some are nearly white. Crop Acclimatization Photo No. 2270.



An arbor covered with Chayote vines.

The arbor was made of rough poles and posts from the woods. The posts are placed 10 to 15 feet apart and the arbor top is 6 feet from the ground. The cross poles are run lengthwise 2 feet apart. Half-way between each two posts a single Chayote should be planted. Photo No. 15833.

killed by frost, but as far north as South Carolina the roots live over winter if protected by a litter or manure mulch, and produce a mass of vigorous vines the following season. It produces good crops of fruit for several years.

The fruit is pear-shaped and somewhat corrugated, with a single flat seed. There are both smooth and spiny, and white and green varieties. The chayote has a more delicate flavor and texture than the summer squash or the vegetable marrow. It makes a delicate salad for use with mayonnaise, can be stuffed and baked, creamed, fried with



A chayote vine on a fence.

A two-year old vine which was neglected the first year but was well fertilized the second season. It responded by making a rapid growth of 50 feet and producing 65 fruits. Apparently, however, the vine bears less freely on fences than on arbors. Photo No. 19429.

batter as fritters, cooked with meat in stews, or made into a sauce, which is strikingly similar to apple sauce. Because of these uses, it has distinct advantages over the vegetable marrow or summer squash. The large tuberous perennial root of the Chayote vine, resembling in character the true yam, is quite as highly esteemed in tropical countries as is the fruit.

The vine is useful as a screen on fences and outbuildings, and during the early summer is particularly attractive; later it loses its leaves. Small but interesting vines can be grown indoors as pot plants.



Chayote vine as a porch climber.

In November, 1914, a single fruit of the Chayote was planted by Mr. L. C. Smith at the corner of his house near Brooksville, Fla. Inside of 12 months it had covered the porch, spread halfway round the house, and had climbed over wires into two oak trees 30 feet from the house. It began to bear in August, and before frost in December, bore over 400 fruits. Photo No. 19428.

The seed Chayotes are usually sprouted before planting, being placed on shelves in a warm dry place for this purpose. The Chayotes should be planted out when the sprouts have appeared, if protection from frost can be given. Planting at least two of each variety in adjoining hills should increase the yield.

When planting, place the entire fruit *horizontally* just below the surface of the ground, preferably in a well-drained, deep sandy loam, enriched with well-rotted manure or compost. Do not plant it on end.

They should be planted 8 to 10 feet apart, and be trained on an arbor, trellis or fence; even the northern or eastern exposure of a porch or out-building has proven a suitable location. If an arbor is used, place heavy wire netting on top with finer netting on the sides on which to train the vines. In Florida and the Carolinas, an average vine may yield 50 to 100 or more fruits. The vine starts to yield in August or September and continues until frost.

The Chayote will grow best on a well-drained, rich, sandy loam, but it can probably be grown on any type of soil, if well-drained and fertilized. Chayotes must be watered thoroughly at least once a week during dry periods, as they are unable to withstand droughts. During such times, it is also necessary to protect the soil, covering the roots with a hay mulch. It requires good clean cultivation up to the fruiting period. A hive of bees near the vines will assist materially in the fertilization of the flowers for the production of fruit.

Little is known regarding the diseases of the Chayote, but the insect pests are probably similar to those attacking other cucurbits and should be treated in a similar way. Any new diseases appearing on it should be reported to the Department at once.

With a yield of many thousand fruits to the acre, weighing on the average a pound apiece, this crop has promising possibilities and deserves serious consideration by truck growers in the South.

The Chayote is as yet but slightly known on any of the northern markets of this country, although it has found a steady sale in the London and Paris markets, and growers should bear this fact in mind in planning to grow this vegetable. It is believed, however, that when a regular supply is available, it will be possible to develop markets for it in the larger cities.

